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# THE POULTRY INDUSTRY OF PETALUMA, CAL.

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*Petaluma, Cal.*

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By P. H. LAWLER,  
*Petaluma, Cal.*

### THE INDUSTRY THROUGHOUT THE STATE.

There are no records which show the beginning of the poultry industry of California. Certainly poultry were here as early as 1850, when immigrants brought them "across the plains" from "the States" for foundation stock upon the new farms to be opened or in the mining districts. Gold mining absorbed the attention of all men in those days, and the preservation of the chicken industry devolved therefore upon the women and children. It was many years later before a gold mine was discovered in the chicken industry.

It must not be understood that all parts of the State are equally well adapted for poultry raising. The raising of chickens, for instance, is not generally a paying business except upon a strip 40 miles wide along the Pacific. Turkeys, however, thrive in all parts of the State, and the counties of Mendocino, Colusa, Glenn, Tehama, and Lake are regarded as the turkey center. In these counties it is not unusual for one to see flocks of turkeys ranging in number from 2,000 to 5,000. Grain is produced in this section in large quantity and feed is consequently comparatively cheap. The turkeys of Mendocino and Lake counties have a reputation for their excellent table qualities, and thousands of them are annually marketed in all sections of the State. The high, dry ranges in the foothills afford excellent runs for turkeys. Geese and ducks are found in every part of the State.

### PETALUMA A POULTRY CENTER.

The year 1889 found many people engaged exclusively in the poultry business in Sonoma County, especially in the neighborhood of the town of Petaluma. This town, which has a population of about 5,000, is 36 miles in a northerly direction from San Francisco, on an arm of San Pablo Bay. The surrounding cities, including San Francisco, have a combined population of 600,000, and all these draw

largely upon the Petaluma district for eggs and poultry. The soil, except east of the town, is of a sandy loam, in some places containing clay and gravel. East of the town the soil is adobe, and on this the chickens do not thrive well. Shade and good water are everywhere abundant. From May to October there is no rain; a few frosts occur in December and January; there is never snow and ice. In the wet season the temperature is usually from 60° to 65° F.; occasionally it drops in winter to 35° to 40° F. In the summer the temperature usually is about 70°, but some times, for a few days only in a season, it reaches 95° F. The annual rainfall is about 30 inches.

A few years ago the land about Petaluma was in stock and dairy farms, but all this is now devoted also to poultry. About nine-tenths of the people who are living near the town are engaged in raising poultry. In the town itself there may be found a few hens in every back yard. In the suburbs there are on acre lots from 600 to 1,000 fowls. Farther out, a mile or two from the town, the tracts contain from 3 to 10 acres; 4 or 5 miles out the farms are from 10 to 100 acres in extent; and at a distance of 10 to 15 miles there are poultry farms of 500 to 600 acres. There is a small valley about 3 miles from the city where there are 40,000 laying hens on a single square mile, not to mention the hundreds of thousands of chicks that are hatched there every year.

In this connection it is interesting to note that in the immediate vicinity of Petaluma there are 1,000,000 laying hens. If it were possible to add to this the number of males employed and the number of chickens sold annually an idea would be had of the very great number in that locality.

It will be very natural for readers of this article to desire to know what the income is from a given number of hens. Of course, egg and poultry production is like any other business in that the one who knows his work best and attends to it most assiduously is the one who succeeds in marked degree. As an example of what may be done in one year with 500 hens, the following tabular statement is given. The prices are such as have obtained in this locality:

3,723 dozen eggs, at 31½ cents.....	\$1, 170. 75
145 broilers, at 42½ cents.....	61. 62
200 pullets, at 50 cents.....	100. 00
Total .....	1, 332. 37
Cost of feed.....	400. 00
Profit .....	932. 37

It should be stated, however, that the poultry raisers of Petaluma expect an average annual income of \$1 per hen only.

## SHIPMENTS OF POULTRY AND EGGS.

In 1889, when the poultry business of Petaluma first came into prominence, one of the leading expressmen says he was doing well when he handled 50 cases (a case equals 36 dozens) of eggs per day. At the present time he handles from 200 to 300 cases a day. Other expressmen give similar experiences.

Fowls are shipped alive in coops of wooden frames having wire rods or heavy hexagonal-mesh wire netting. Eggs are shipped in an especially heavy case holding 36 dozens.

The following statement of the sales of eggs and poultry at Petaluma is from the daily records kept by the Petaluma Poultry Journal of that place:

*Shipments of poultry and eggs for the year 1903.*

Month.	Eggs.	Poultry.	Month.	Eggs.	Poultry.
	Dozens.	Dozens.		Dozens.	Dozens.
January .....	96,485	1,301	August .....	197,635	3,582
February .....	258,164	1,698	September .....	195,954	3,959
March .....	562,258	1,479	October .....	127,254	2,486
April .....	558,048	2,362	November .....	95,906	2,615
May .....	448,782	1,780	December .....	135,039	1,875
June .....	447,906	5,006	Total .....	8,406,335	31,545
July .....	242,754	3,392			

These products are all marketed in San Francisco—some to go into the mining districts, but much the greater part goes to fill Government orders and for shipment on steamers for Alaska, Hawaii, and the Philippines.

In Petaluma there are twelve firms dealing exclusively in poultry and eggs, as well as branches of two large commission houses of San Francisco. These houses pay out about \$3,000 a day for poultry and eggs.

Incidentally let it be stated that San Francisco receives poultry products, in addition to those from Petaluma and other parts of the State, to the value of \$1,500,000 annually. These products are called "eastern" as distinguished from "coast." The eastern eggs received in 1903 amounted to 824,648 dozens. In 1904 they increased to 1,109,160 dozens.

The following table shows the average prices of eggs in the San Francisco market for the years of 1903 and 1904 and the amount of coast eggs received for the same years.

*Average prices and quantity of eggs received in San Francisco, 1903 and 1904.\**

Week ended—	Prices of eggs per dozen.		Receipts of coast eggs.	
	1903.	1904.	1903.	1904.
	Cents.	Cents.	Cases.	Cases.
January 7 .....	30	35	3,170	3,681
January 14 .....	30½	31	3,618	5,161
January 21 .....	30½	27	3,674	5,847
January 28 .....	31½	26	3,880	5,592
February 4 .....	34½	28	5,702	6,049
February 11 .....	36½	26½	5,532	6,807
February 18 .....	34	25½	6,153	6,709
February 25 .....	33½	24½	7,320	6,506
March 3 .....	29	20½	9,511	8,883
March 10 .....	26	17	9,148	8,791
March 17 .....	25	17	10,029	8,914
March 24 .....	25½	20	10,180	9,691
March 31 .....	25	21	11,908	9,884
April 7 .....	24	19½	11,974	9,375
April 14 .....	22	19	11,132	9,508
April 21 .....	21	19	10,540	8,538
April 28 .....	21	19½	11,667	10,026
May 5 .....	21	21½	11,577	9,633
May 12 .....	21½	21½	11,175	9,088
May 19 .....	24	19½	11,445	9,261
May 26 .....	23½	19	10,586	9,603
June 2 .....	23	19	8,057	9,251
June 9 .....	24	21½	8,422	8,722
June 16 .....	25	23	8,146	8,533
June 23 .....	25	23	7,128	7,465
June 30 .....	24½	22½	8,369	7,962
July 7 .....	24½	23	6,480	6,912
July 14 .....	25½	26	6,190	8,473
July 21 .....	26½	28	6,221	8,110
July 28 .....	25½	25½	5,080	8,388
August 4 .....	24½	26	5,241	8,034
August 11 .....	25	26	4,796	5,363
August 18 .....	27	29	4,347	4,680
August 25 .....	28	30½	3,727	4,417
September 1 .....	29	33	4,561	4,011
September 8 .....	29	35	2,388	3,533
September 15 .....	30	35	4,015	4,337
September 22 .....	31	37	3,488	3,549
September 29 .....	30	40	3,445	3,732
October 6 .....	28½	39	3,334	3,507
October 13 .....	27½	39½	3,598	3,235
October 20 .....	28½	40	3,439	3,373
October 27 .....	29	41½	3,886	3,193
November 3 .....	30	43½	3,977	3,231
November 10 .....	31½	48	3,685	3,005
November 17 .....	32½	48½	3,609	3,398
November 24 .....	32	43½	3,635	3,075
December 1 .....	30	39	3,671	3,518
December 8 .....	28½	38	3,701	2,802
December 15 .....	27½	39½	3,827	2,781
December 22 .....	26	40	3,920	2,816
December 29 .....	26	40	4,141	3,028
Total .....			328,445	323,933

\* These statistics are from Dairy Produce and Review.

Thus we see that the coast eggs received on the San Francisco market in 1904 amounted to 11,661,588 dozens. The importance of Petaluma as an egg-producing center is strikingly apparent when we subtract her output of 3,406,335 dozens in 1904 from the above, leaving a balance of 8,255,253 dozens for all the rest of the State.

#### BREEDS OF CHICKENS IN USE.

The breeds of chickens that form the basis of this large industry in the vicinity of Petaluma are as follows: Barred Plymouth Rocks, Brown Leghorns, White Leghorns, and a few other varieties in small numbers. However, the White Leghorns soon demonstrated their special adaptability for the conditions obtaining in this locality, and they now predominate in an overwhelming degree; in fact, it is said that the vicinity of this town is called one vast White Leghorn farm.

#### METHOD OF HATCHING AND RAISING.

The hatching and raising of the chickens is practically all done by artificial methods. Not one one-hundredth of 1 per cent is now hatched by the hen. Artificial incubation is so important that a large incubator plant is located at Petaluma. In order to demonstrate the fitness of the hatching machine, this factory conducts a hatchery in which 2,500 eggs are always in course of incubation. On December 16, 1904, 9,000 chicks were hatched in one incubator establishment in Petaluma.

There is here a chicken hatchery which is believed to be the largest in the world. It consists of an incubator house in which 30,000 eggs are in all stages of incubation; two houses, each 300 feet in length, and each having a capacity of 2,500 laying hens; and two brooder houses, each 160 feet in length, and having a combined capacity of 100,000 broilers a year. In this plant a ton of feed is used at each feeding time. Electric cars are used in the buildings for carrying feed and wash water and for collecting the eggs and the offal. The daily gathering of eggs is about 3,600.

The feed is all stored in the upper floor and is delivered into the feed troughs by means of chutes. Water is furnished by a system of pipes to each pan. The floors are all of concrete, and the whole institution may be whitewashed in three hours by the use of machinery.

When the chickens are ready to be removed from the incubator they are transferred to brooding houses, where they are placed in small individual hot-air brooders having a capacity equal to 1,000 chicks. When the chicks graduate from the brooders they are placed in small houses and taught to use the perch. Here they

remain until the sexes are separated and the cockerels are marketed. There are no yards in connection with some brooding houses, while there are extensive ones in connection with others.

A large quantity of the feed is of mixed grains ground and sold as a balanced ration, wheat being the standard feed. Whole corn is used in the winter months, but none in the summer. The ground product is given to the chicks. The corn used comes in carload lots from eastern States.

#### COLD STORAGE FOR EGGS.

There is located at Petaluma a cold-storage plant with a capacity for 10,000 cases (360,000 dozens) of eggs. In one day in 1903 this plant paid out \$3,529 for 16,927 dozens of eggs. It has been ascertained here that the average loss of eggs placed in cold storage amounts to the very small number of 2 for each case of 36 dozens.

#### THE TURKEY INDUSTRY OF CALIFORNIA.

The following information about the turkey industry in California is furnished by Mr. Ed. Hart, of Clements, Cal.:

The turkey industry of this State is becoming a very important one. During the last two years the demand has exceeded the supply. Turkeys have been grown here for over thirty years, but the demand has never before been so steady and the prices so remunerative as at present. The demand is especially large at Thanksgiving and Christmas times. During these holiday seasons the San Francisco receipts are from 250 to 300 tons. Besides, Oregon sends from 20 to 40 tons more, and from 50 to 70 tons come from the East. The largest receipts of California turkeys were formerly from the southern part of the State, but now they are from the northern part, the largest producing counties being Colusa, Glenn, Tehama, Mendocino, and Lake.

The prices that have been paid for turkeys in the San Francisco market during each week of 1903 and 1904 are shown in the following table, which has been compiled for use here by J. Zentner & Co., of San Francisco:

*Prices of turkeys in 1903 and 1904.*

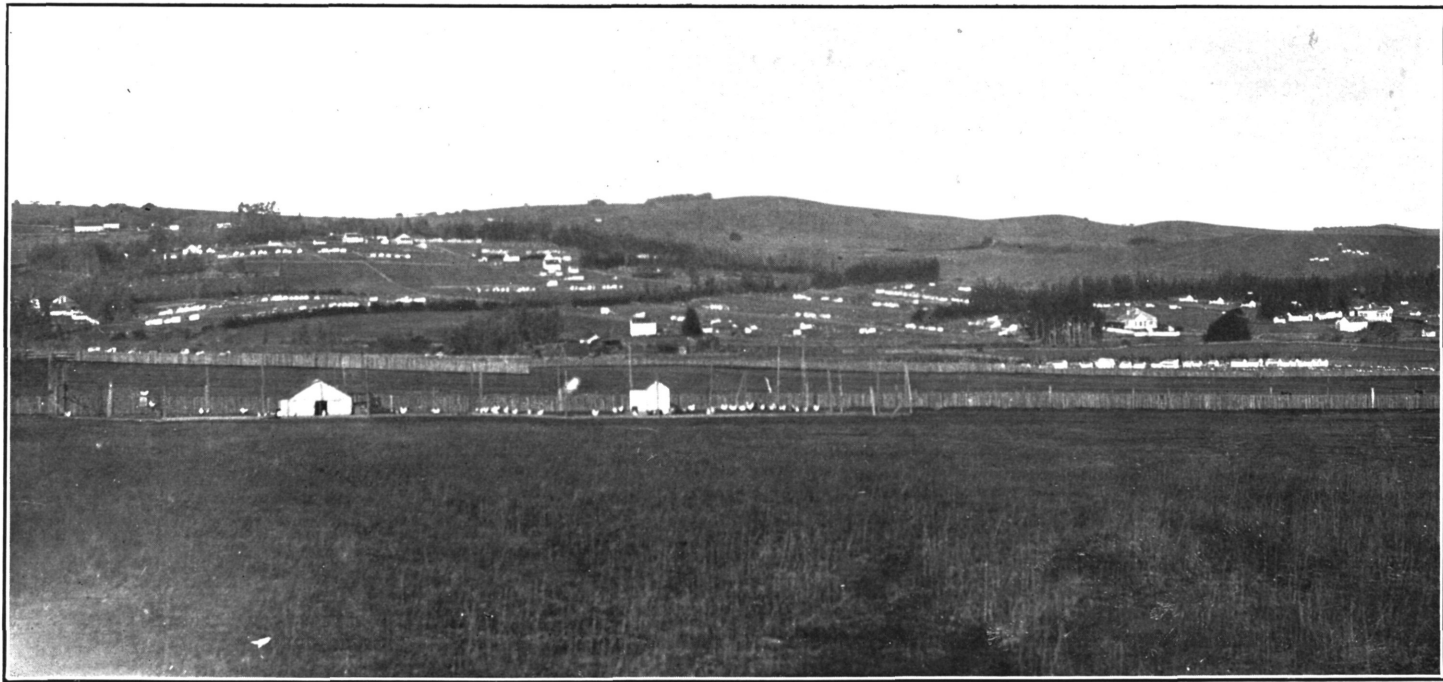
Date.	Live.		Dressed.	Date.	Live.		Dressed.
	Grown.	Young.			Grown.	Young.	
1903.	<i>Cents.</i>	<i>Cents.</i>	<i>Cents.</i>	1903.	<i>Cents.</i>	<i>Cents.</i>	<i>Cents.</i>
January 3 .....	17-18	-----	20-22	March 14 .....	15-17	-----	18-20
January 10 .....	17-18	-----	21-23	March 21 .....	15-17	-----	18-20
January 17 .....	17-18	-----	21-23	March 28 .....	15-17	-----	18-20
January 24 .....	17-18	-----	19-21	April 4 .....	15-17	-----	-----
January 31 .....	17-18	-----	20-22	November 7 .....	-----	-----	20-23
February 7 .....	17-18	-----	20-22	November 14 .....	-----	-----	20-24
February 14 .....	17-18	-----	20-22	November 21 .....	-----	-----	21-24
February 21 .....	16-18	-----	18-20	November 28 .....	20-22	-----	22-25
February 28 .....	15-17	-----	18-20	December 5 .....	21-23	-----	25-28
March 7 .....	15-21	-----	18-20	December 12 .....	19-22	-----	20-23



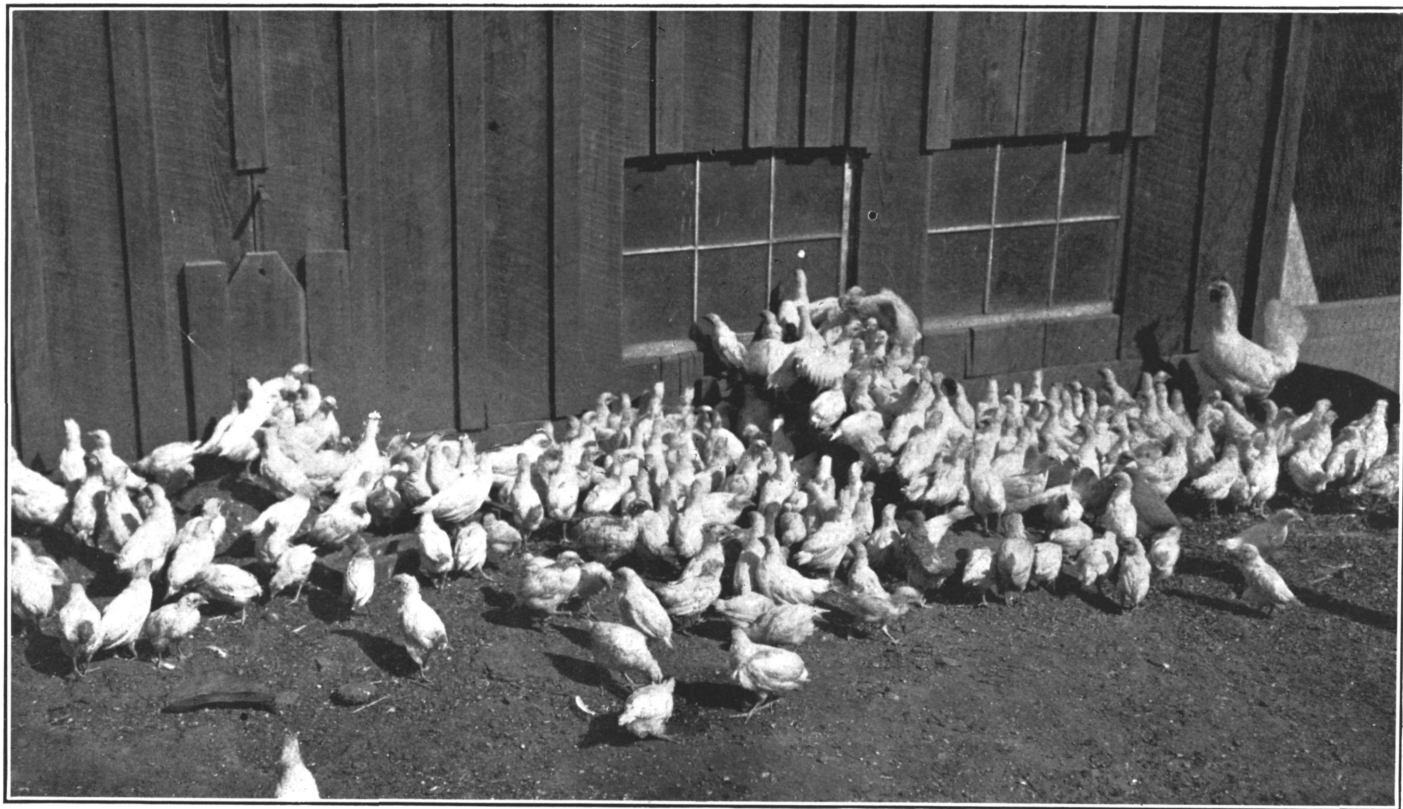
*Prices of turkeys in 1903 and 1904—Continued.*

Date.	Live.		Dressed.	Date.	Live.		Dressed.
	Grown.	Young.			Grown.	Young.	
1903.	<i>Cents.</i>	<i>Cents.</i>	<i>Cents.</i>	1904.	<i>Cents.</i>	<i>Cents.</i>	<i>Cents.</i>
December 19 .....	19-21	-----	20-22	June 18 .....	14-15	-----	-----
December 25 .....	18-20	-----	20-23	July 2 .....	14-15	-----	-----
1904.				July 9 .....	14-15	-----	-----
January 1 .....	16-18	-----	18-22	July 16 .....	14-15	-----	-----
January 9 .....	18-20	-----	22-25	July 23 .....	14-15	-----	-----
January 23 .....	14-18	-----	17-20	July 30 .....	15-17	-----	-----
January 30 .....	15-17	-----	18-20	August 6 .....	15-17	24-25	-----
February 6 .....	15-17	-----	18-20	August 13 .....	15-17	24-25	-----
February 13 .....	15-17	-----	18-21	August 20 .....	15-17	24-25	-----
February 20 .....	15-17	-----	18-21	August 27 .....	15-17	20-25	-----
February 27 .....	15-17	-----	18-21	September 3 .....	14-15	20-22	-----
March 5 .....	16-17	-----	16-21	September 9 .....	14-15	20-22	-----
March 12 .....	16-18	-----	18-22	September 17 .....	14-15	20-22	-----
March 19 .....	16-18	-----	18-22	September 24 .....	14-15	20-22	-----
March 26 .....	16-18	-----	18-22	October 15 .....	14-15	18-22	-----
April 2 .....	18-18	-----	18-22	October 22 .....	14-16	20-22	-----
April 9 .....	16-18	-----	18-22	October 29 .....	14-15	20-22	-----
April 16 .....	16-18	-----	18-22	November 5 .....	15-18	21-23	-----
April 23 .....	15-17	-----	16-18	November 12 .....	17-20	20-22	23-25
April 30 .....	15-17	-----	18-20	November 19 .....	17-20	20-22	20-26
May 7 .....	14-15	-----	18-20	November 26 .....	14-15	-----	124-18
May 14 .....	14-15	-----	18-20	December 3 .....	15-17	-----	18-23
May 21 .....	14-15	-----	18-20	December 10 .....	16-18	-----	22-25
May 28 .....	14-15	-----	18-20	December 17 .....	18-20	-----	20-22
June 4 .....	15-16	-----	-----	December 24 .....	20-22	-----	24-27
June 11 .....	14-15	-----	-----	December 31 .....	21-23	-----	24-27

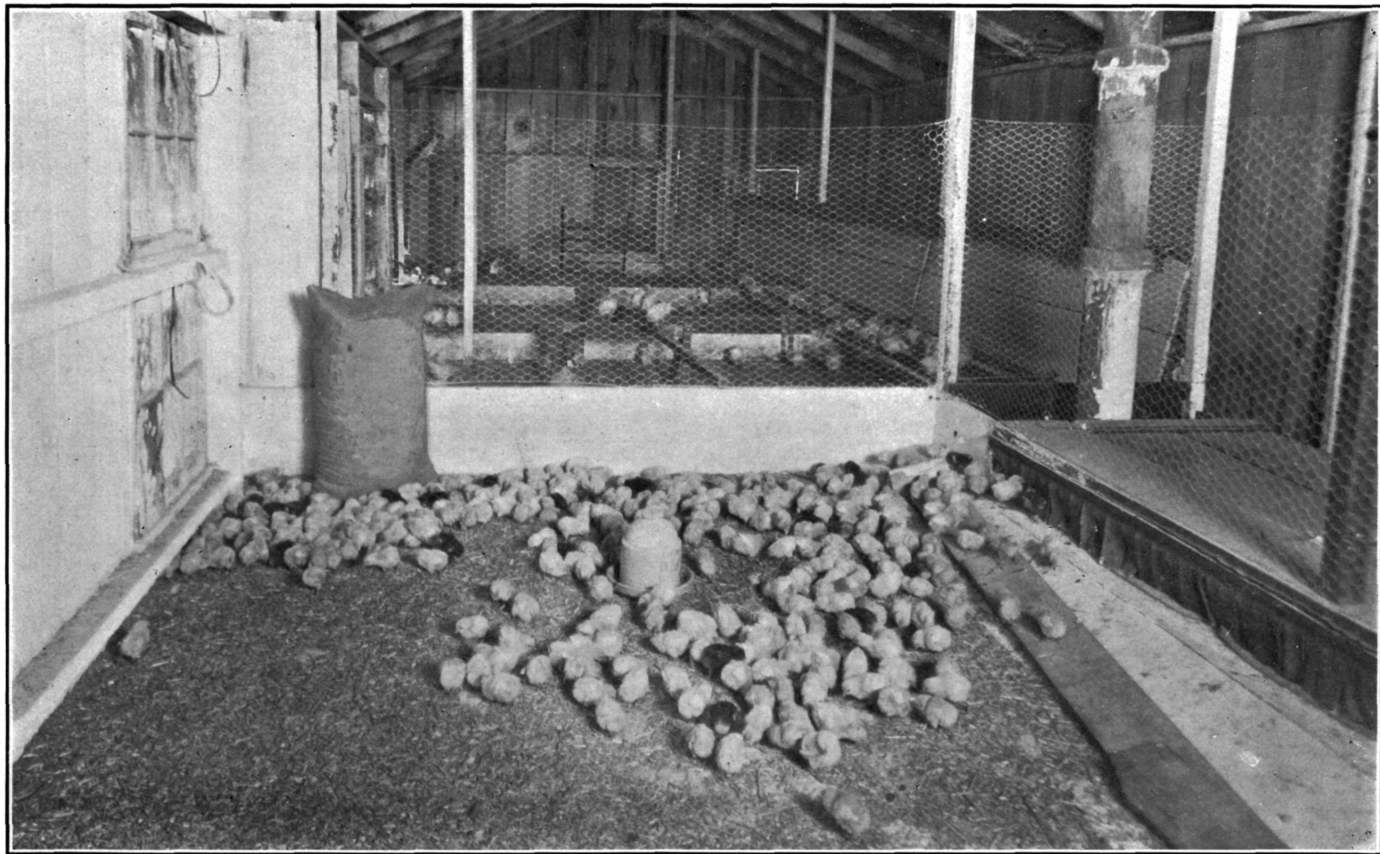
In this State the farmer who a few years ago regarded turkeys as a nuisance which could not be tolerated has arrived at the conclusion that turkey raising is a source of great profit. The wives and children of farmers have taken up this industry vigorously. There is no live stock on the farm that is raised with less trouble and expense than turkeys. The most trouble encountered is during the first six weeks, after which they will hunt their own food. One hundred young turkeys can be maintained the first six weeks on \$1 worth of feed. Then add to this about \$25 worth of feed at fattening time and we have about all of the cash outlay. The income from the lot should be from \$200 to \$250.



FORTY THOUSAND CHICKENS ON ONE SQUARE MILE OF TERRITORY.



WHITE LEGHORN CHICKS.



INTERIOR VIEW OF BROODER HOUSE.